Does not
Circulate

Getting a Foot in the Door

Increasing
the number of women
on State Boards and
Commissions

UNIV. OF LOUISVILLE LAW LIBRARY

1995

Kentucky Commission on Women

614A Shelby Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 564-6643

This publication was produced by the
Kentucky Commission on Women

Written by Lindsay Campbell, executive assistant
&
Jenny Springer, intern

Edited by Lindsay Campbell

1995

UNIV. OF LOUISVILLE LAW LIBRARY

Kentucky Commission on Women
614A Shelby Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 564-6643
Marsha Weinstein, executive director

WHY WOMEN SHOULD SEEK APPOINTMENTS T0 BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Good policy making comes only when the government has sufficient representation of the citizenry. Because women make up 52% of the population, it only follows that representation on state boards and commissions be reflected likewise. While these bodies make decisions which effect the lives of women daily, women are underrepresented or non-existent on these same boards.

In addition, many women have found there is a direct progression from service on a board or commission in one sphere to advancement in another. The contacts you make and the skills you gain can serve as links to greatly enhance your career advancement and your personal effectiveness.

The Kentucky Commission on Women currently works with the Governor's appointments office to get more women appointed to these positions.

BEGINNING THE PROCESS

The process of getting appointed to a board or commission requires preparation by the applicant. It begins with research and the submitting of an application. Anyone seriously interested in obtaining an appointment must also take responsibility for personal contact with some influential people and the appointing authority.

A good place to begin your search is the Kentucky Commission on Women. Upon request, staff can send you a complete listing of all boards and commissions, as well as an application. From this point, identify those boards and commissions which interest you the most. Try to narrow your selections to two to three. Then begin your research.

RESEARCHING A BOARD OR COMMISSION

It is essential to find out all you can about a board or commission before you choose it, and certainly before you apply for an appointment.

There are two kinds of information you will need to know. One is technical, such as the board's purpose, duties, membership number and composition, qualifications, meetings schedule, compensation, etc. The other is soft information, such as the political realities and personal relationships on the board.

Technical information can be obtained through KCW's publication *Kentucky State Boards and Commissions*, but your research should not end there. Soft information can be acquired by attending some board meetings and talking to past and present members. By using these two methods you can discover ways of contributing through your experience, skills and expertise. Remember, there are over 300 boards and commissions to choose from, and gathering information will make the selection process much easier.

ASSESSING YOUR QUALIFICATIONS

Assessing your qualifications to serve is the next important step. Compare yourself with the present members. It is essential that you thoroughly analyze all your training and experience to build a resume that will increase your chances for being selected.

WHAT TO LIST:

1. ***Your interest in the board or commission.*** Why do you want to serve on this board or commission? A genuine interest is important because it implies your willingness to put in the time and effort necessary to do a good job.
2. ***Your professional training and work experience.*** Emphasizing your professional experience that would pertain to the board or commission might give you an extra advantage when being considered.
3. ***Your volunteer work.*** List the ways in which you have already contributed to your community through volunteer work.
4. ***Your affiliations.*** List your professional and personal affiliations, as well as any related interests you might have.
5. ***Your personal qualities.*** Listing qualities such as "self-motivated, cooperative, creative, and goal-directed" can be beneficial.

DEVELOPING A RESUME

Your resume should have a professional appearance. Have someone competent edit for content, grammatical and technical errors. In order to give the Governor's Office a full look at your qualifications, be sure to include any appropriate hobbies or community service projects which might reflect acquired expertise and tip the scales in your favor. It is also important to keep these documents as precise as possible, realizing that hundreds of resumes may be under consideration.

A RESUME CONSISTS OF FIVE SECTIONS:

1. ***Basic information:*** include name, address, and telephone numbers where you can be reached both day and night.
2. ***Objectives:*** The opening line should immediately let the reader know your interests. Name the specific appointment you want and be brief.
3. ***Qualifications:*** Look back at your list of qualifications and from those state your most relevant qualification first.
4. ***Experiences:*** This includes paid work experience, special projects and volunteer programs. Do not list typing, answering the telephone or things of that nature.
5. ***Membership in organizations:*** Besides listing memberships in organizations, use this section to list references or state that they can be furnished upon request. Be sure to also include the telephone number of your references, because they will most likely be called. Be sure to ask permission from your reference before using his or her name.

COVER LETTERS

You should always submit a cover letter with a resume. A cover letter should be polite and brief, precisely stating your reason for submitting the resume.

WHERE TO SEND YOUR RESUME

Application forms can be obtained from the Governor's Office, and when completed should be sent, along with a cover letter and resume, to: **Boards and Commissions Director, Governor's Office, The Capitol, Frankfort, KY 40601.**

In addition, you can contact the Commission on Women, which maintains a talent-bank of qualified women and forwards applications and resumes to the Governor's Office when appropriate openings become available. Although the Commission provides this service, please remember this is only one tool you should use in your pursuit. The responsibility rests primarily with you.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is advisable to get a few well-placed recommendations. The issue is quality, not quantity. Your recommendations should come from people who know you and your work. Try to get letters of support from people who work in a field that is related to the type of appointment you are seeking.

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT: How Much and What Kind

Knowing what support is available to you, how to obtain it, and how to use it plays a vital role in acquiring a seat on a board or commission. You can gather support from: *political groups, women's* groups, elected officials, (especially those of the same political party as the appointing authority); *prominent people* in the community, professional organizations, unions, knowledgeable people and friends and relatives who may be in a position to help you; *community groups* in which you have been active, as well as those concerned with activities of the board or commission on which you wish to serve; and MOST IMPORTANTLY from those who know the appointing authority or know his/her assistants or personal friends. Seek appointment actively! Don't assume that it will just drop in your lap.

WHO MAKES THE APPOINTMENTS?

The Governor makes appointments to state boards and commissions, but in many instances he or she is required to select from a list of nominations provided by professional organizations, for instance from KY Medical Association for appointments to the Kentucky Medical Licensure Board. In such cases, contact should be initiated through these organizations. Also, there are times when appointments require confirmation by the House and Senate, in which case it might be helpful to contact your legislators and request a recommendation.

WHAT TO DO NOW

This process can be a long and tedious one, and you won't always know the status of your application. It's good to have someone to talk to, perhaps a women who has already been through the appointment process. NEVER GIVE UP! Getting appointed to a board or commission is definitely worth the effort.

AFTER THE APPOINTMENT IS MADE

If successful, congratulations on having your efforts rewarded! Think back over your "campaign" and evaluate it. Analyze what you did, how you timed it, and which things you would do differently. Now you are in a position to share your information with others who seek your help and advice. Remember to thank all those who helped you.

If not successful, be aware that the most qualified person is not always the one appointed, as political concerns often lead to the final decision. Try to discover the "real" reason you were not selected, then decide whether or not you want to be considered for the next vacancy. If you decision is to try again, keep in mind that you must eliminate the "real" reasons. Continue to keep current with the board or commission: its meetings, its members and its decisions. Keep building additional support for yourself and become more politically active. Next time YOU will be the successful applicant.

UPWARD MOBILITY

Suppose, for example, that your work with a community group leads to an appointment to a state commission. With the additional experience you gain on the state commission and the increased visibility, you might position yourself for an appointment on a federal advisory commission.

An alternative progression might begin with service on the board of directors of a non-profit organization. This entree, especially at the local level, is usually comparatively easy to achieve. Because many women who were once "professional volunteers" have joined the ranks of the gainfully employed, non-profit boards often are eager for directors who will really work at their directorships. Thus, if you are prepared to participate effectively, your performance on a non-profit board can be a distinguished one with high visibility.

SOME ADDITIONAL HINTS

1. ***Develop a specific area of expertise and become well known for it.*** Most people advance in their careers by developing expertise and then moving on to more general appointments and assignments. It's hard to start as a generalist and then specialize, although a lot of women want to do it that way.

2. ***Establish a track record in local affairs*** by means of volunteer and community experience and describe this on your resume as you would a paid job.

3. ***Work on political campaigns***, preferably successful ones where the candidate is still in office and can support your appointment.

4. ***Serve on an advisory commission to a specific agency*** if you are aiming ultimately toward a paid appointment with that agency. This will enable you to make high-level contacts within the agency and to demonstrate your abilities and expertise.

5. ***Be in the right place at the right time.***

University of Louisville Libraries
U005 00688792 1

Printed with state funds
on recycled paper